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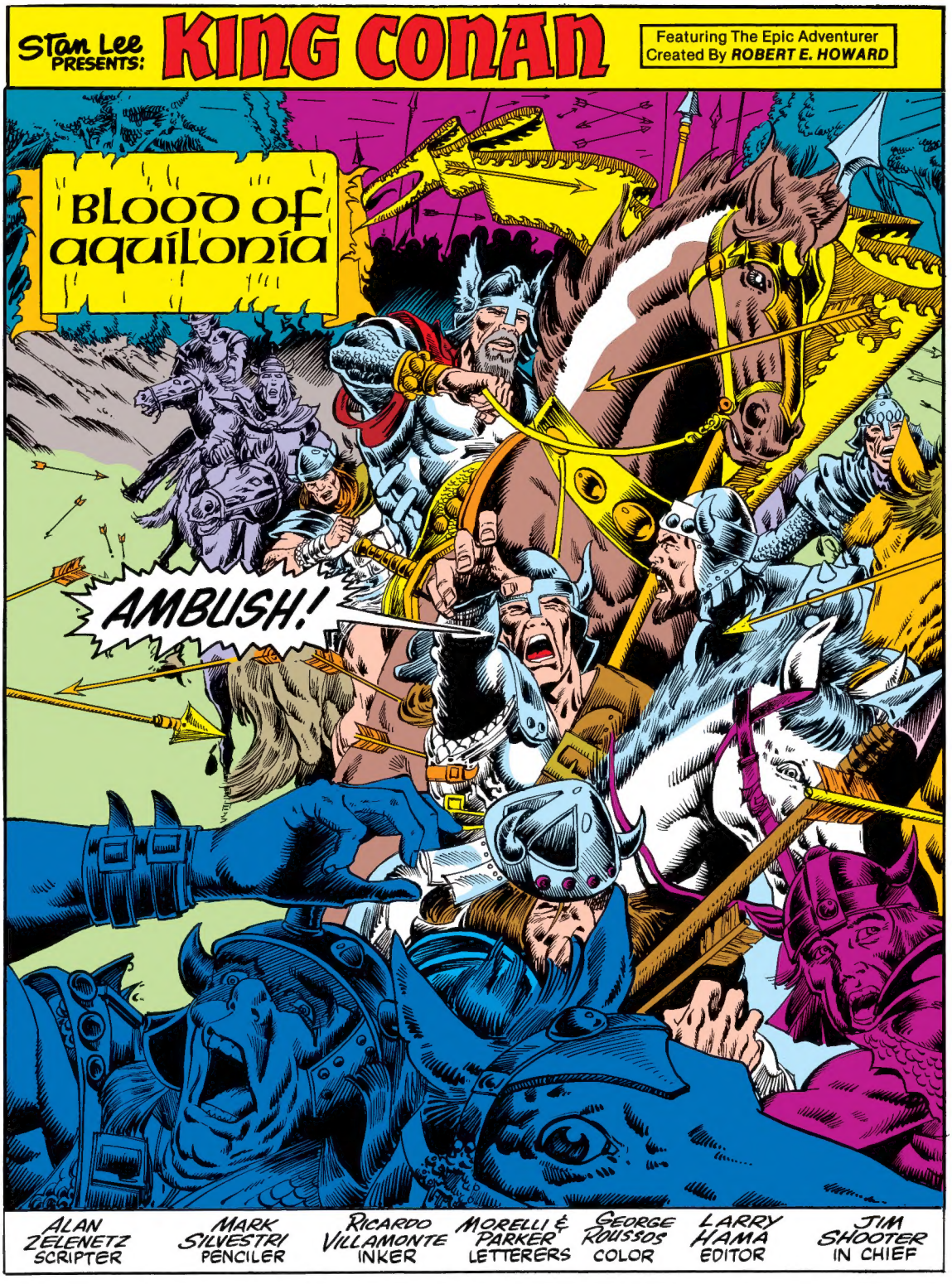
MIGHTIEST MONARCH OF A TIME-LOST LAND!
KING CONAN
™



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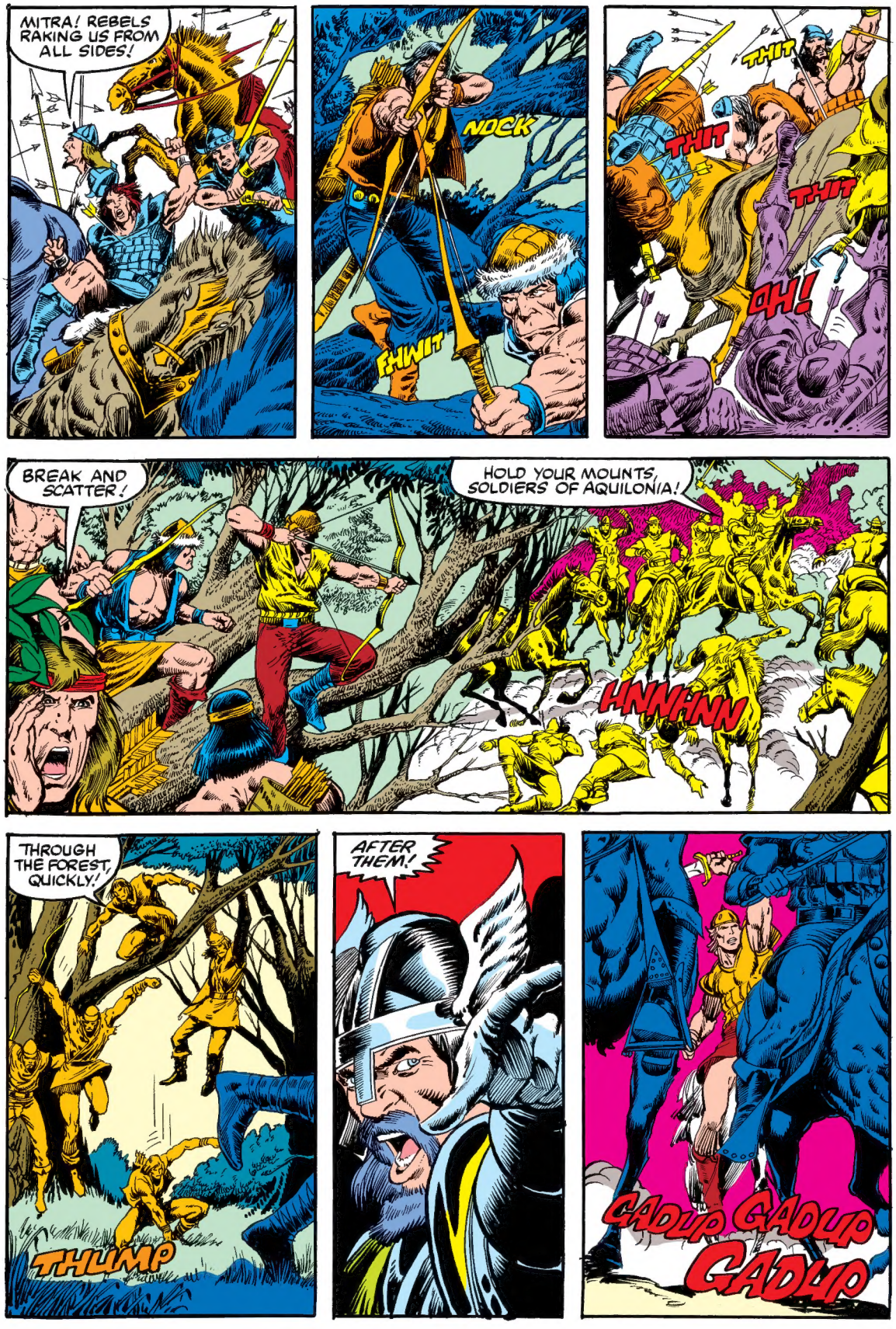
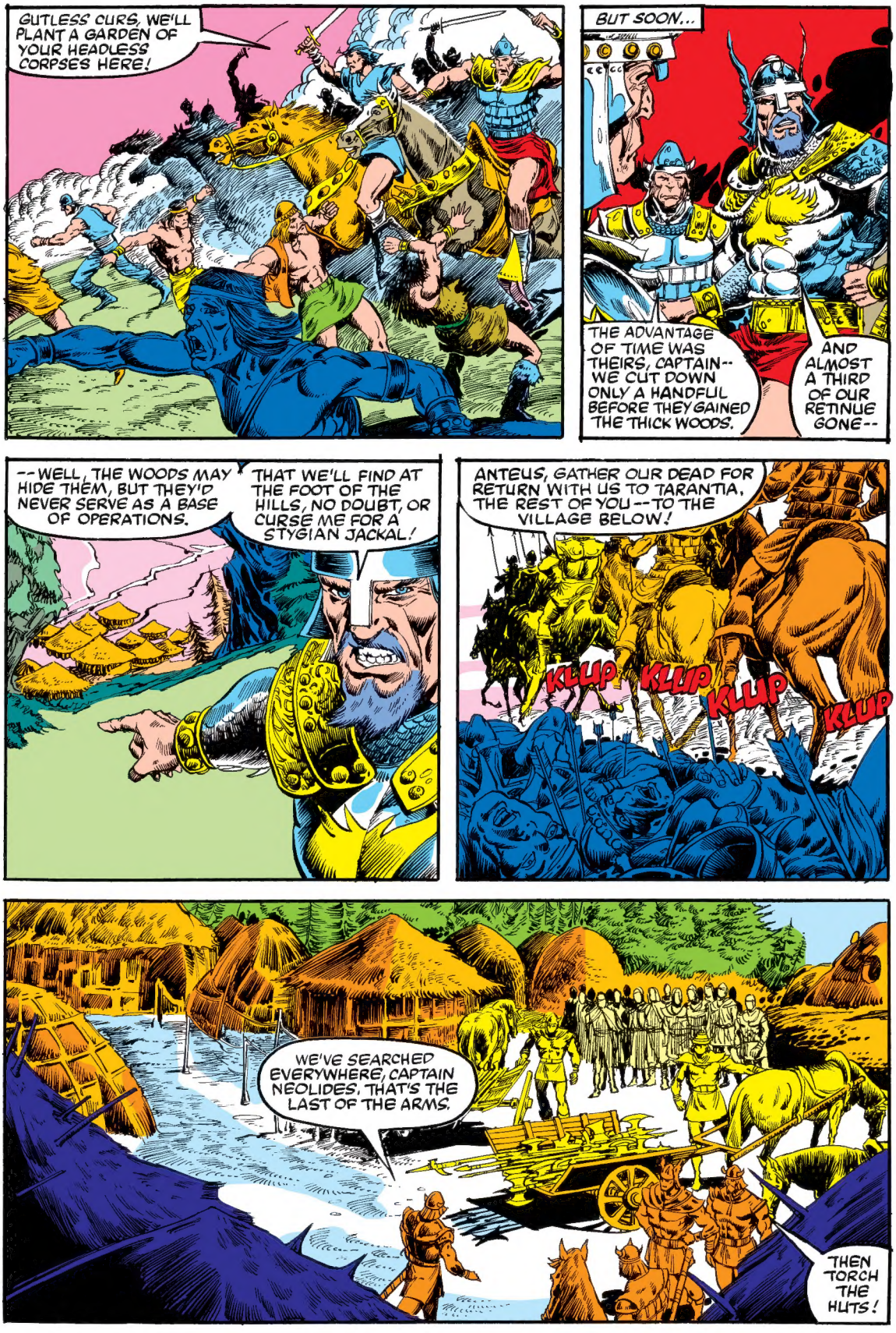
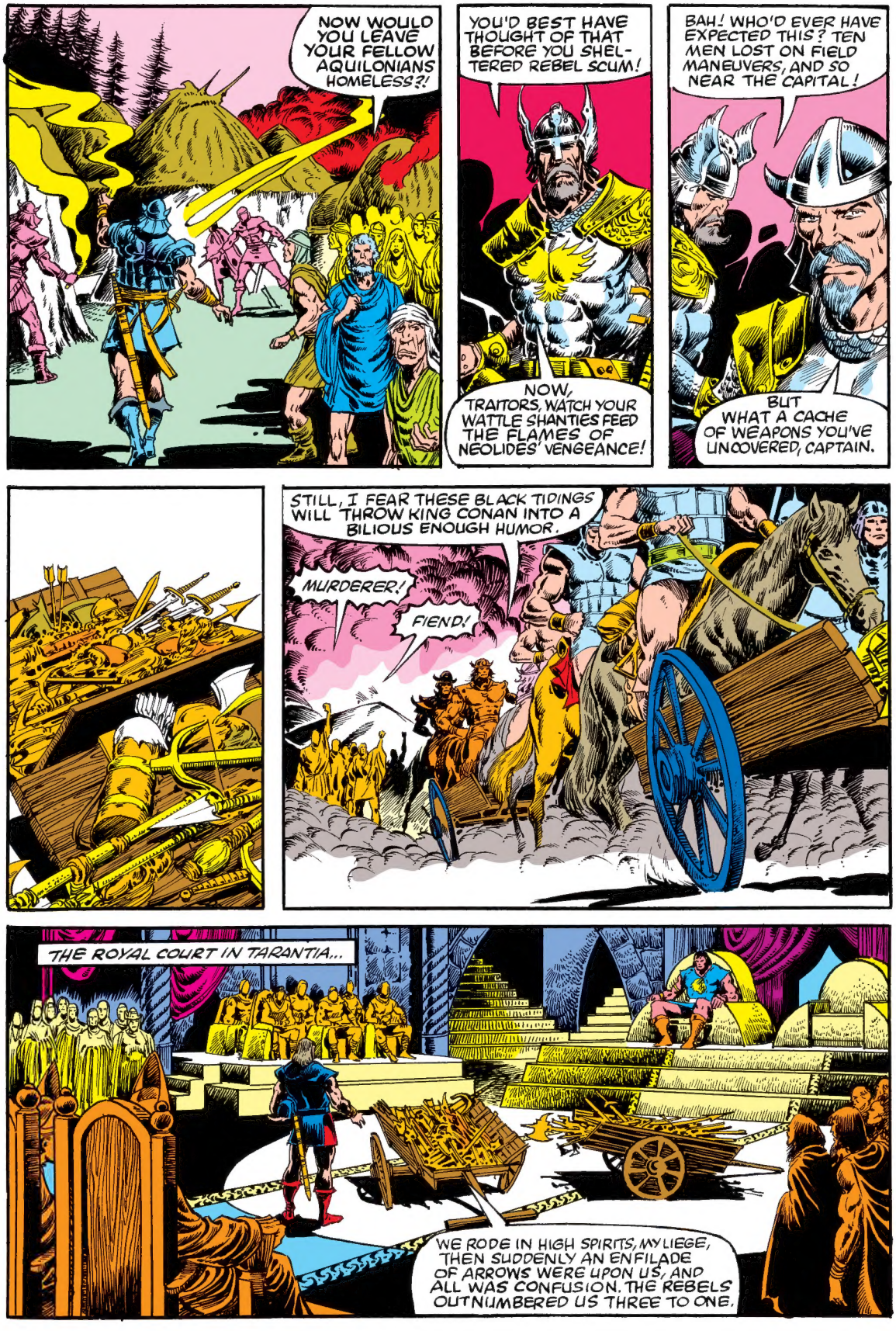

MITRA! REBELS RAKING US FROM ALL SIDES!
NOCK
FHWIT
THIT
THIT
THIT
AH!
BREAK AND SCATTER!
HOLD YOUR MOUNTS, SOLDIERS OF AQUILONIA!
HNNHNN
THROUGH THE FOREST, QUICKLY!
THUMP
AFTER THEM!
GADUP GADUP
GADUP

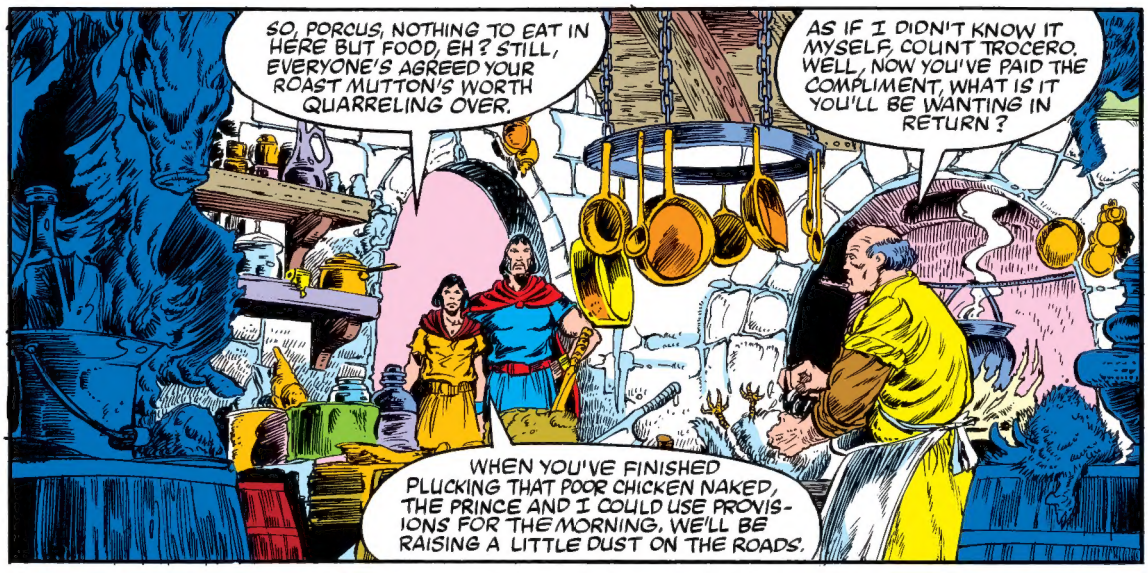

GUTLESS CURS, WE'LL PLANT A GARDEN OF YOUR HEADLESS CORPSES HERE!
BUT SOON...
THE ADVANTAGE OF TIME WAS THEIRS, CAPTAIN-- WE CUT DOWN ONLY A HANDFUL BEFORE THEY GAINED THE THICK WOODS.
AND ALMOST A THIRD OF OUR RETINUE GONE--
--WELL, THE WOODS MAY HIDE THEM, BUT THEY'D NEVER SERVE AS A BASE OF OPERATIONS.
THAT WE'LL FIND AT THE FOOT OF THE HILLS, NO DOUBT, OR CURSE ME FOR A STYGIAN JACKAL!
ANTEUS, GATHER OUR DEAD FOR RETURN WITH US TO TARANTIA, THE REST OF YOU--TO THE VILLAGE BELOW!
KLUP
KLUP
KLUP
KLUP
WE'VE SEARCHED EVERYWHERE, CAPTAIN NEOLIDES, THAT'S THE LAST OF THE ARMS.
THEN TORCH THE HUTS!


NOW WOULD YOU LEAVE YOUR FELLOW AQUILONIANS HOMELESS?!
YOU'D BEST HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT BEFORE YOU SHELTERED REBEL SCUM!
NOW, TRAITORS, WATCH YOUR WATTLE SHANTIES FEED THE FLAMES OF NEOLIDES' VENGEANCE!
BAH! WHO'D EVER HAVE EXPECTED THIS? TEN MEN LOST ON FIELD MANEUVERS, AND SO NEAR THE CAPITAL!
BUT WHAT A CACHE OF WEAPONS YOU'VE UNCOVERED, CAPTAIN.
STILL, I FEAR THESE BLACK TIDINGS WILL THROW KING CONAN INTO A BILIOUS ENOUGH HUMOR.
MURDERER!
FIEND!
THE ROYAL COURT IN TARANTIA...
WE RODE IN HIGH SPIRITS, MY LIEGE, THEN SUDDENLY AN ENFILADE OF ARROWS WERE UPON US, AND ALL WAS CONFUSION. THE REBELS OUTNUMBERED US THREE TO ONE.

I'VE HEARD ENOUGH, NEOLIDES!
GRIMLY, CONAN, KING OF AQUILONIA RISES FROM HIS THRONE...
...AND THE ECHO OF HIS VOICE QUIVERS ON THE AIR, A FAINT HISS IN A HALL NOW GROWN TO A TERRIBLE SILENCE...
SO THIS IS THE HARVEST OF OUR VILLAGE FARMERS--
-- AND A BUMPER CROP, IT SEEMS!
CHAK
NOW WHAT HAVE WE HERE? AH, KAMBUJAN KNIVES...
...AND CROSSBOWS, WELL, WELL, WELL...
...POLEAXES, DAGGERS...
...MORNINGSTARS!

CROM'S BLOOD, HAS AQUILONIA BECOME A NATION OF IRONSMITHS ARMING THEMSELVES AGAINST THE CROWN?! NO, THESE WEAPONS ARE FORGED ELSEWHERE AND SMUGGLED ACROSS OUR BORDERS!
BUT THEY ARE A CLEAR DANGER IN THE HANDS OF OUR CITIZENS!
A DANGER INDEED, SIRE!
WHO--?
DOES PRINCE CONN DARE?!
BUT GREAT ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY THE TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF A VILLAGE?!
MY PRINCE, IF YOU'LL PERMIT, IT IS THE REBELS WHO CHOSE TO HIDE AMONG WOMEN AND CHILDREN. IT WAS OUR TASK TO ROOT THEM OUT!
WE DID NOT SEEK TO HARM CIVILIANS, BUT THERE COMES A TIME WHEN WE MUST SET AN EXAMPLE THAT WE'LL NOT TOLERATE SEDITION AGAINST THE KING, YOUR FATHER!
YOU FED AN ENTIRE VILLAGE TO THE FLAMES, GUILTY AND INNOCENT ALIKE! AND THIS EVENING REPORTS HAVE IT THERE ARE HUMAN BONES AMONG THE ASHES!
CIVILIAN CASUALTIES ARE REGRETTABLE, BUT INEVITABLE, I FEAR, ESPECIALLY WHEN COMMON FOLK CONSORT WITH SKULKING REBELS.
WHO'D BREED LIKE FESTERING MAGGOTS IF WE'D GIVE THEM LICENSE, UNTIL THE ENTIRE REALM CRAWLED WITH THEM!
AND THEN WHAT OF AQUILONIA'S DESTINED PEACE AND PROSPERITY?

BUT WHAT PRICE PROSPERITY, FATHER? SOME OF THOSE PEOPLE MAY HAVE BEEN UNWILLING PAWNS--
BUT THIS IS A KINGDOM OF MANY SUBJECTS, CONN. OFTEN WE MUST MAKE OUR DECISIONS FOR THE GREATER GOOD--
AND IS THE SWORD THE ONLY MEANS OF DECISION MAKING?
HEAR, HEAR!
AYE, CONN!
WOULD YOU HAVE ME BANDY WORDS WITH THIS BOW AND ITS ARCHER?!
OR DEBATE THOSE WHO WOULD THROW THIS KINGDOM BACK TO SCURVY DESPOTS?!
SNAP
STILL, OUR SOLDIERS OVERREACTED AFTER THE FACT AND SHOULD BE PUBLICLY REBUKED BY THEIR SOVEREIGN FOR--
BILE AND WORMWOOD, DO YOU DARE BOY?!!
YOUR MAJESTY, THE SITUATION IS ONE THAT NATURALLY LENDS ITSELF TO CONTROVERSY. NOW TEMPERS FLARE--
--LET ME TAKE THE PRINCE--
TAKE THE YOUNG COLT, TROCERO, AND REIN HIM IN--
HA! WOULD YOU TEACH YOUR SIRE TO BE KING AND YOU STILL WET BEHIND THE EARS, WHELP?!

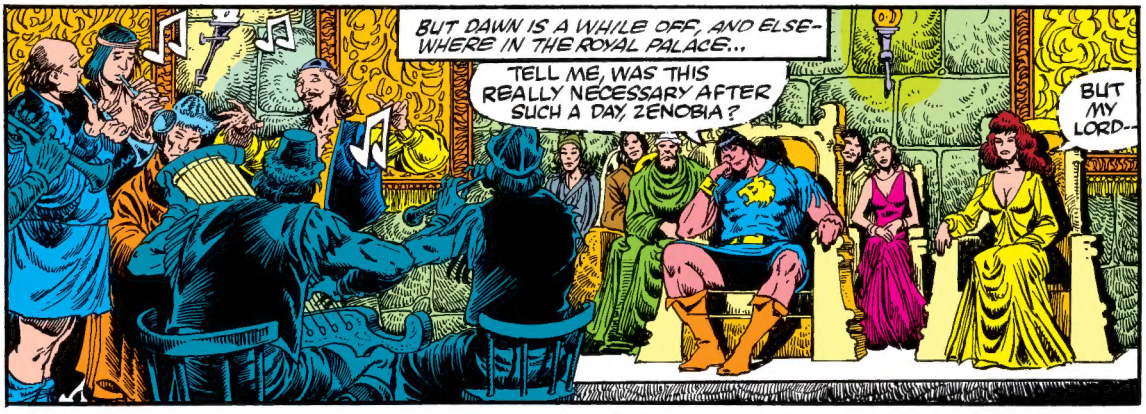

SO, PORCUS, NOTHING TO EAT IN HERE BUT FOOD, EH? STILL, EVERYONE'S AGREED YOUR ROAST MUTTON'S WORTH QUARRELING OVER.
AS IF I DIDN'T KNOW IT MYSELF, COUNT TROCERO. WELL, NOW YOU'VE PAID THE COMPLIMENT, WHAT IS IT YOU'LL BE WANTING IN RETURN?
WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED PLUCKING THAT POOR CHICKEN NAKED, THE PRINCE AND I COULD USE PROVISIONS FOR THE MORNING. WE'LL BE RAISING A LITTLE DUST ON THE ROADS.

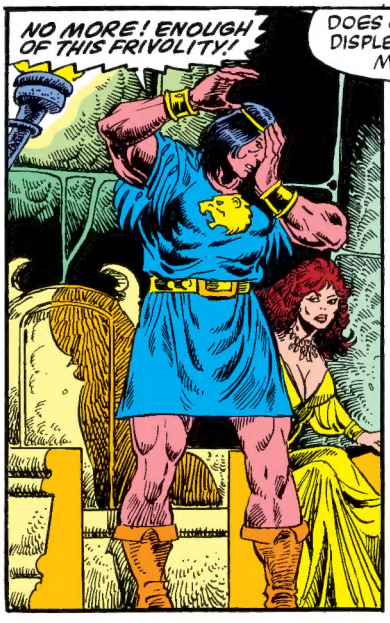
YOU SEE, PRINCE CONN, THERE ARE MANY WAYS -- SLURP -- TO SPICE A STEW, AND MANY WAYS TO RULE A KINGDOM AS LARGE AS AQUILONIA.
AHH, THAT'S GOOD!

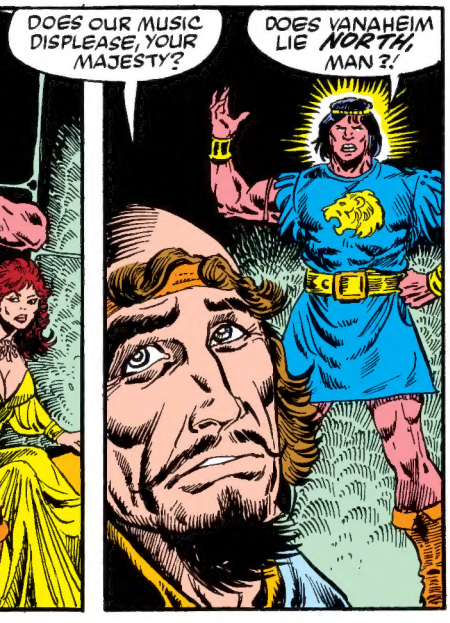
YOUR FATHER'S TASK IS NO EASY ONE, FOR PLEASING ONE SUBJECT OFTIMES MEANS DISPLEASING ANOTHER. QUITE COMPLICATED INDEED.
AND YOUR EXPERIENCE -- EVEN WITH YOUR INITIAL ARMY TRAINING -- IS, WELL, SHALL WE SAY, UM, RATHER LIMITED?

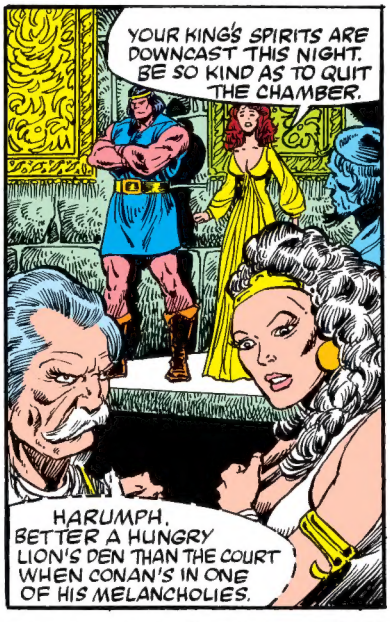
PERHAPS, TROCERO, STILL, MY MOTHER, THE QUEEN, SAYS THAT WE ARE A CIVILIZED PEOPLE AND NOT BARBARIANS.

GOOD NIGHT, PORCUS, AND SO WE ARE, LAD, BUT WE LIVE IN AN UNCIVILIZED WORLD, THOUGH YOUR FATHER'S BROUGHT MUCH PROGRESS.
WHAT YOU NEED IS A GOOD HARD LOOK AT THE WORLD, MY PRINCE. TOMORROW, THEN, AT DAWN.


BUT DAWN IS A WHILE OFF, AND ELSEWHERE IN THE ROYAL PALACE...
TELL ME, WAS THIS REALLY NECESSARY AFTER SUCH A DAY, ZENOBIA?
BUT MY LORD--


NO MORE! ENOUGH OF THIS FRIVOLITY!

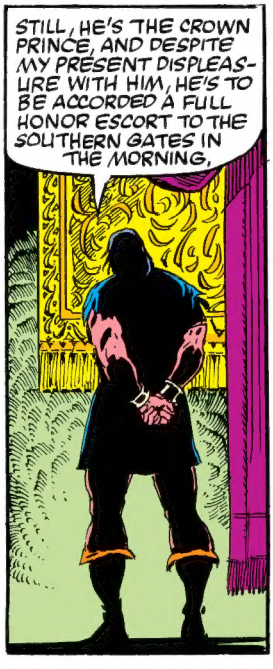

DOES OUR MUSIC DISPLEASE, YOUR MAJESTY?
DOES VANAHEIM LIE NORTH, MAN?!

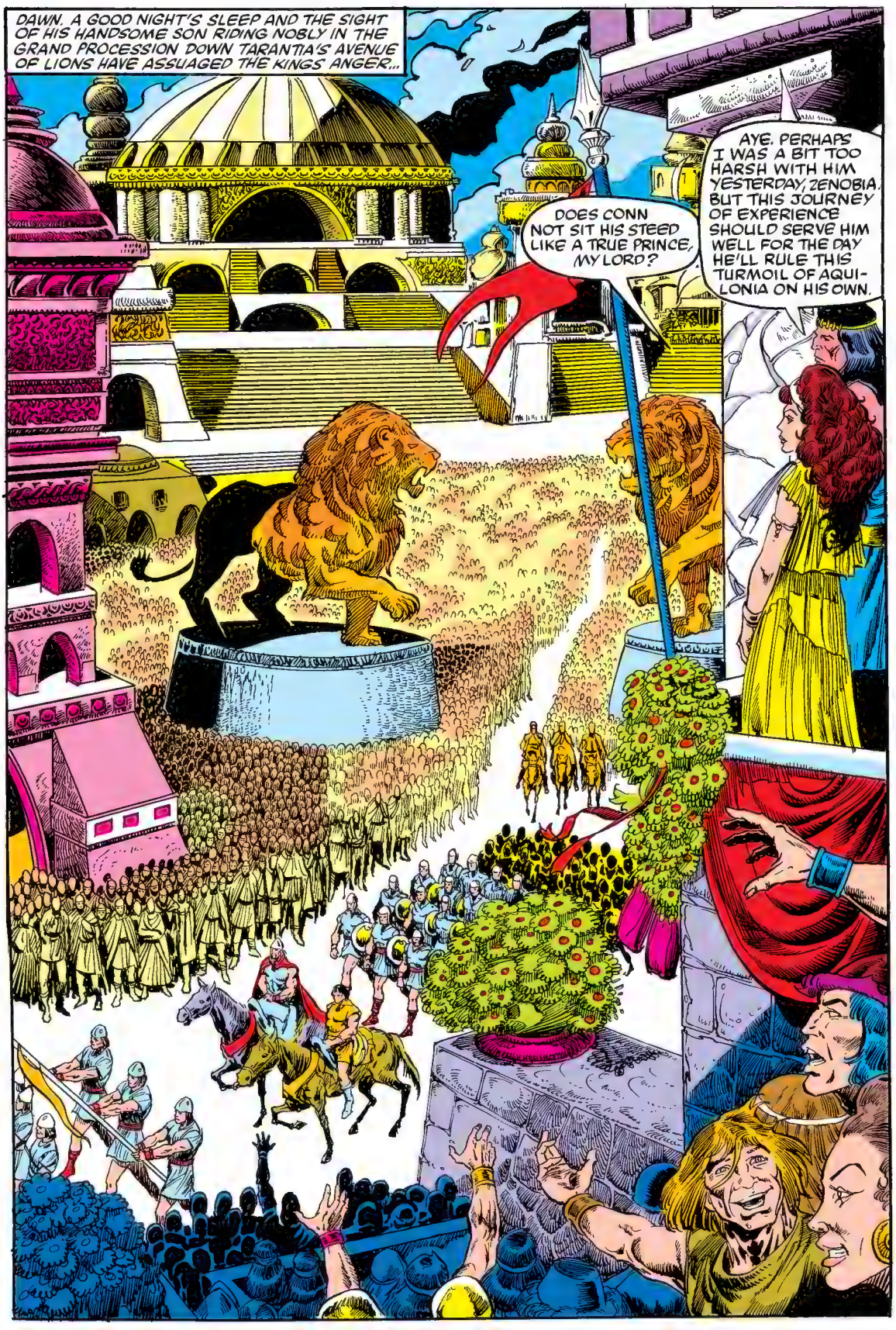

YOUR KING'S SPIRITS ARE DOWNCAST THIS NIGHT. BE SO KIND AS TO QUIT THE CHAMBER.
HARUMPH. BETTER A HUNGRY LION'S DEN THAN THE COURT WHEN CONAN'S IN ONE OF HIS MELANCHOLIES.

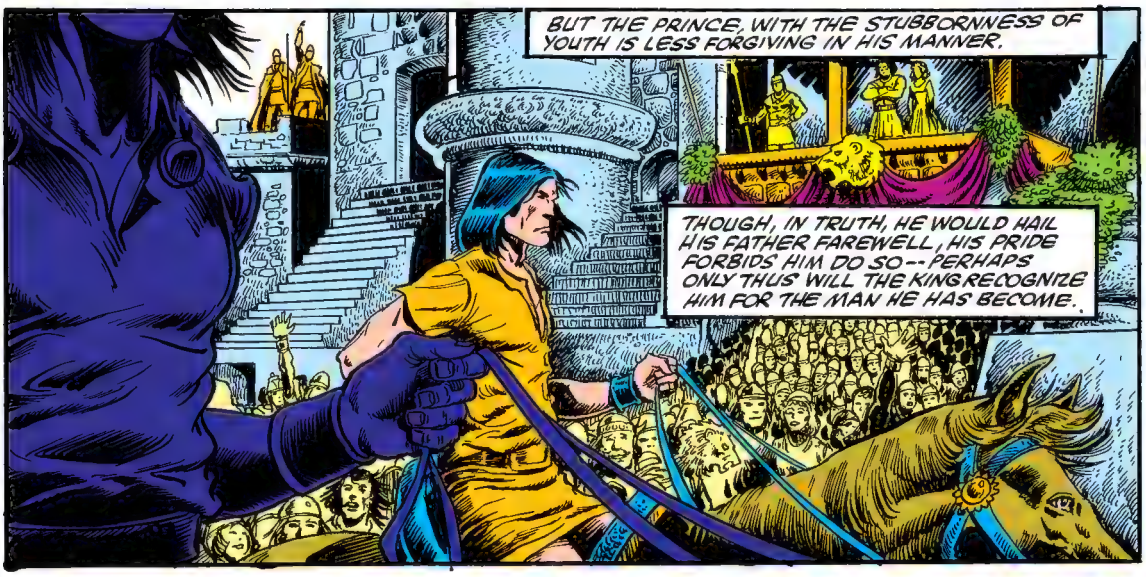
FRIPPERY AND 'FINE MUSIC'-- IS THIS THE CULTURE YOU'VE BEEN FEEDING OUR SON?
YOU AGREED TO ALL, CONAN.
BAH! BUT YOU'VE OVER-CIVILIZED THE LAD. HOW HE TURNED ON ME TODAY--

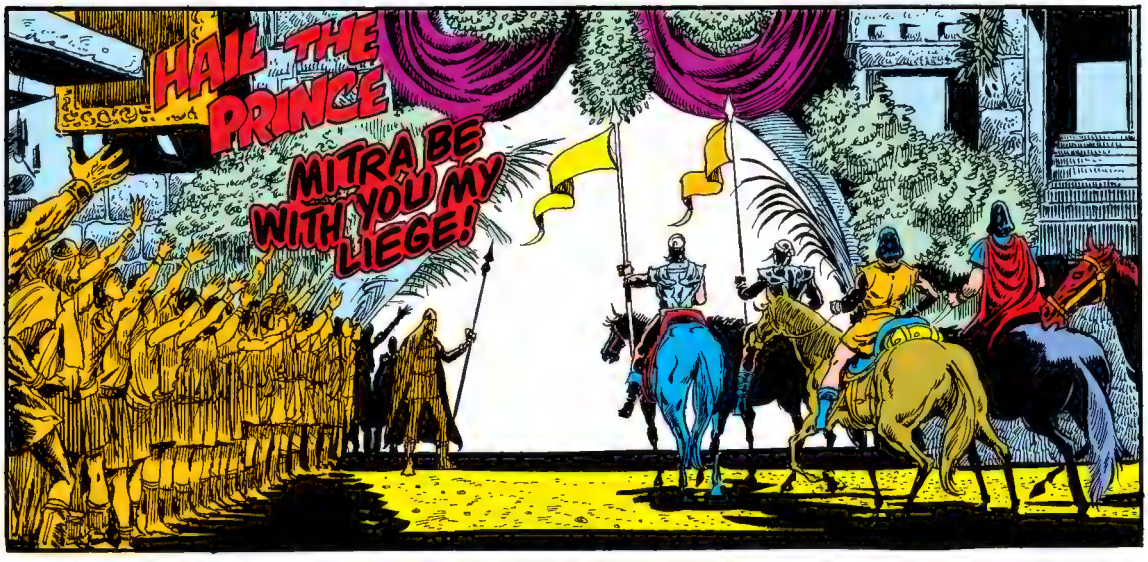
CONAN, YOU'VE SEEN HOW CONN IDOLIZES YOU. BUT HE'S A YOUNG MAN NOW AND, LIKE ALL YOUNG MEN, HE BEGINS TO THINK FOR HIMSELF.

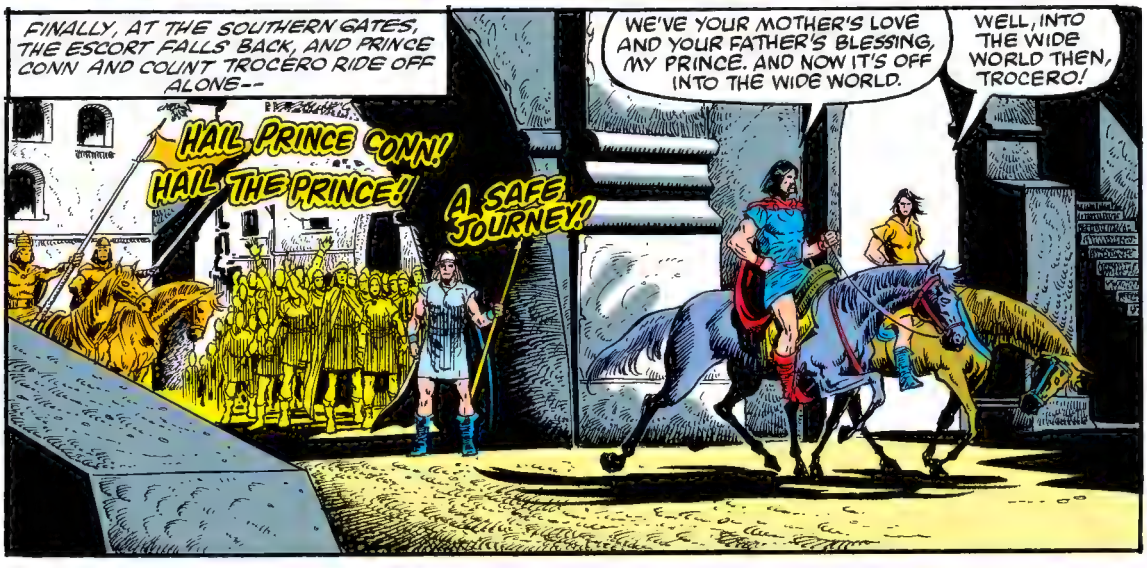
I'LL NOT HAVE A STRIPLING-- NOT EVEN MY OWN HEIR-- PLAY PHILOSOPHER TO ME!
I TRUST TROCERO WILL SEE TO THAT AND TEACH THE BOY TO THINK LIKE A FUTURE KING OF THE GREATEST REALM IN ALL HYBORIA.


STILL, HE'S THE CROWN PRINCE, AND DESPITE MY PRESENT DISPLEASURE WITH HIM, HE'S TO BE ACCORDED A FULL HONOR ESCORT TO THE SOUTHERN GATES IN THE MORNING.


DAWN. A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP AND THE SIGHT OF HIS HANDSOME SON RIDING NOBLY IN THE GRAND PROCESSION DOWN TARANTIA'S AVENUE OF LIONS HAVE ASSUAGED THE KINGS' ANGER...
DOES CONN NOT SIT HIS STEED LIKE A TRUE PRINCE, MY LORD?
AYE. PERHAPS I WAS A BIT TOO HARSH WITH HIM YESTERDAY, ZENOBIA. BUT THIS JOURNEY OF EXPERIENCE SHOULD SERVE HIM WELL FOR THE DAY HE'LL RULE THIS TURMOIL OF AQUILONIA ON HIS OWN.


BUT THE PRINCE, WITH THE STUBBORNNESS OF YOUTH IS LESS FORGIVING IN HIS MANNER.
THOUGH, IN TRUTH, HE WOULD HAIL HIS FATHER FAREWELL, HIS PRIDE FORBIDS HIM DO SO--PERHAPS ONLY THUS WILL THE KING RECOGNIZE HIM FOR THE MAN HE HAS BECOME.


HAIL THE PRINCE
MITRA BE WITH YOU MY LIEGE!


FINALLY, AT THE SOUTHERN GATES, THE ESCORT FALLS BACK, AND PRINCE CONN AND COUNT TROCERO RIDE OFF ALONE--
HAIL PRINCE CONN!
HAIL THE PRINCE!
A SAFE JOURNEY!
WE'VE YOUR MOTHER'S LOVE AND YOUR FATHER'S BLESSING, MY PRINCE. AND NOW IT'S OFF INTO THE WIDE WORLD.
WELL, INTO THE WIDE WORLD THEN, TROCERO!

DAYS LATER...
SO WE RETURN TO SINISTER STYGIA. BUT I'VE HEARD THE STREETS WERE LINED WITH SORCERERS, TROCERO? OR WAS THAT ONLY THE CITY OF NEGTHU?
THEY'VE AN EXCESS OF WIZARDRY AND BLACK MAGIC HERE, YOU CAN BE SURE, LAD. BUT CONJURORS HAUNT TOMBS AND TEMPLES, NOT CARAVAN ROUTES!

A PIECE OF BREAD FROM YOUR PACK, SIRS.

SET BLESS YE!

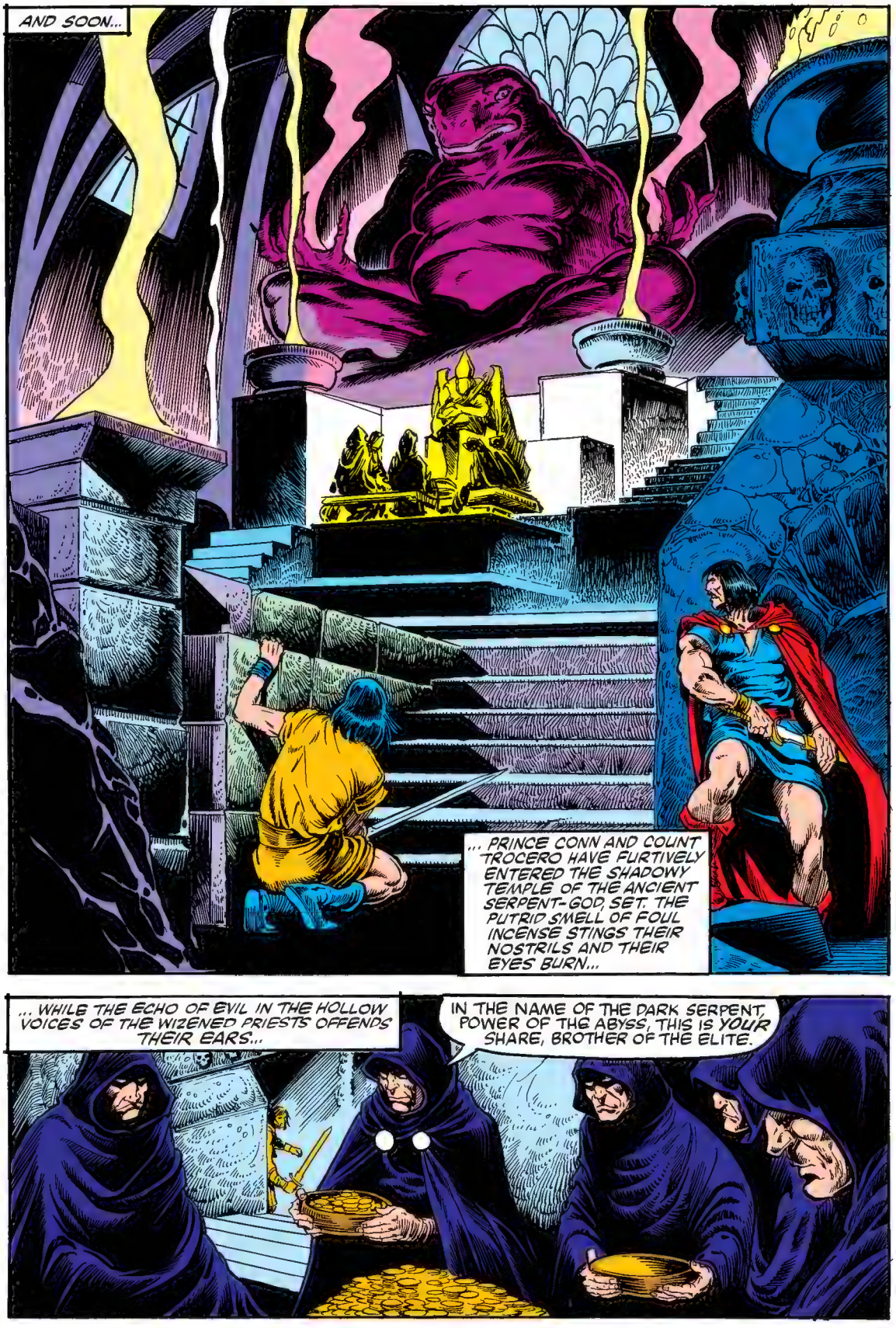
FOOD! FOOD!
FOOD, GOOD SIRS!

WHAT IS THIS, A CITY OF BEGGARS? DON'T YOUR FIELDS ALONG THE RIVER STYX YIELD GRAIN APLENTY?

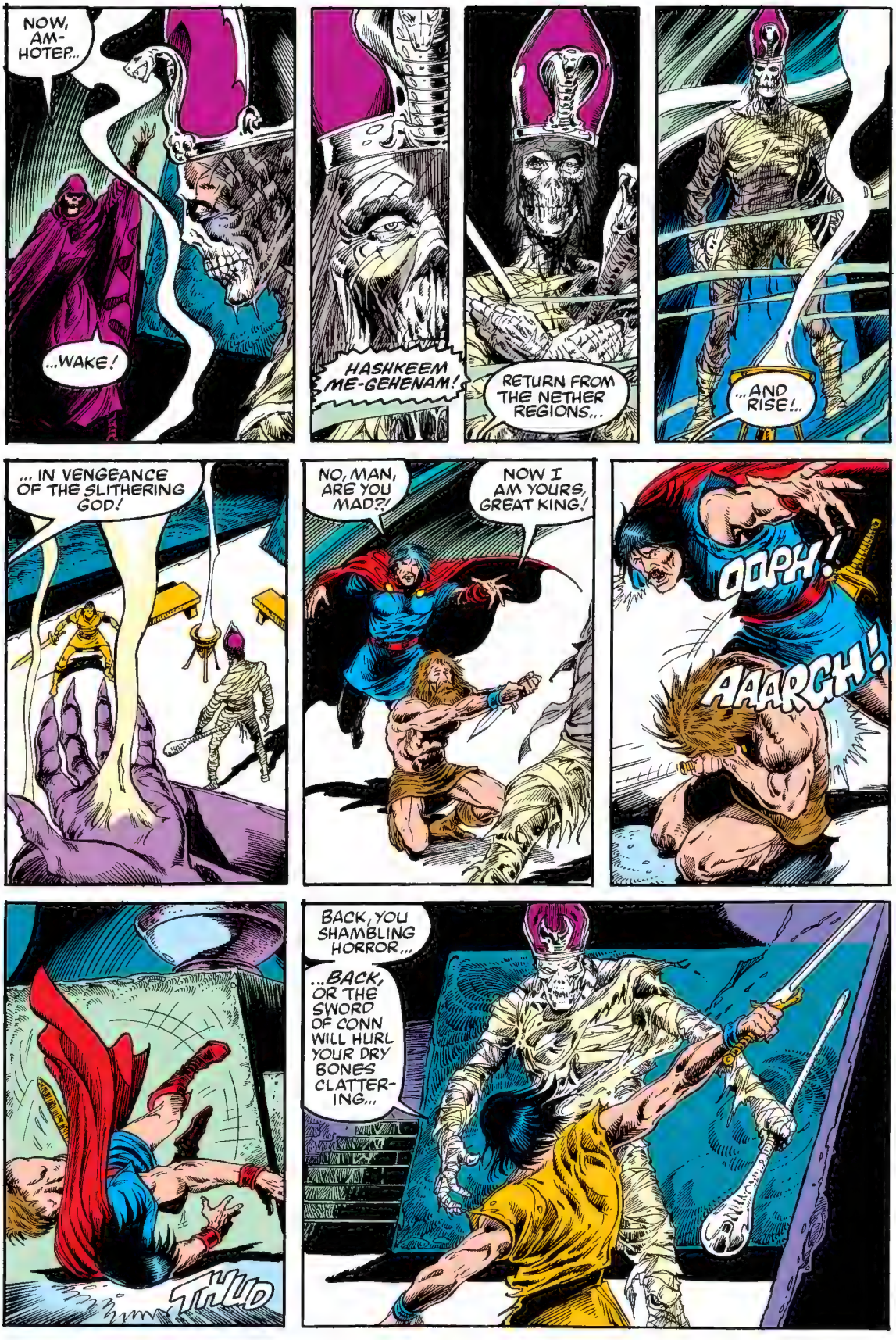
BREAD, A CRUMB SIR!

OUR GRAIN'S COLLECTED BY THE PRIESTS OF SET TO FEED THE SOUL OF THE GREAT AM-HOTEP, OUR GUARDIAN KING WHO SITS THE THRONE OF LIFE AND DEATH.

THEIR KING, AM-HOTEP, IS DEAD. HIS EMBALMED BODY SITS LIFELESS ON A THRONE OF BLACK OBSIDIAN, AND THE PRIESTS HAVE SEIZED POWER IN HIS NAME. THEY RULE THESE SUPERSTITIOUS FOLK BY TERROR AND NECROMANCY, ALL THE WHILE AMASSING THE LAND'S WEALTH. THE CITIZENS MORE FEARFUL FOR THEIR SOULS THAN FOR THEIR FLESHLESS BONES LIVE IN STARVATION AND DIRE POVERTY.
THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER KNOWN HAPPINESS AND WOULD NOT EVEN KNOW HOW TO LONG FOR IT.
OUT OF MY WAY!
IN THE NAME OF AM-HOTEP, KHAMIL THE STYGIAN YIELDS HIS LIFE IN LIEU OF GRAIN OR PENNY!
CLAT CLATTER
WHERE ARE THEY TAKING THAT OLD MAN?
TO BE SACRIFICED IN THE TEMPLE OF SET.
THEN WE MUST FOLLOW AND SAVE HIM, TROCERO!

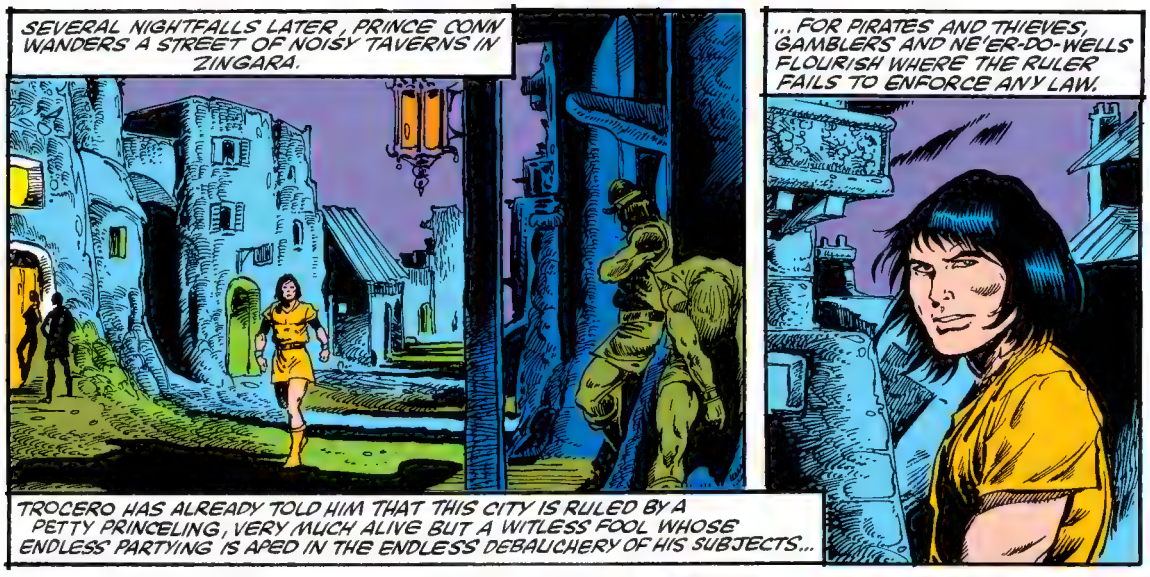

AND SOON...
... PRINCE CONN AND COUNT TROCERO HAVE FURTIVELY ENTERED THE SHADOWY TEMPLE OF THE ANCIENT SERPENT-GOD, SET. THE PUTRID SMELL OF FOUL INCENSE STINGS THEIR NOSTRILS AND THEIR EYES BURN...
... WHILE THE ECHO OF EVIL IN THE HOLLOW VOICES OF THE WIZENED PRIESTS OFFENDS THEIR EARS...
IN THE NAME OF THE DARK SERPENT, POWER OF THE ABYSS, THIS IS YOUR SHARE, BROTHER OF THE ELITE.

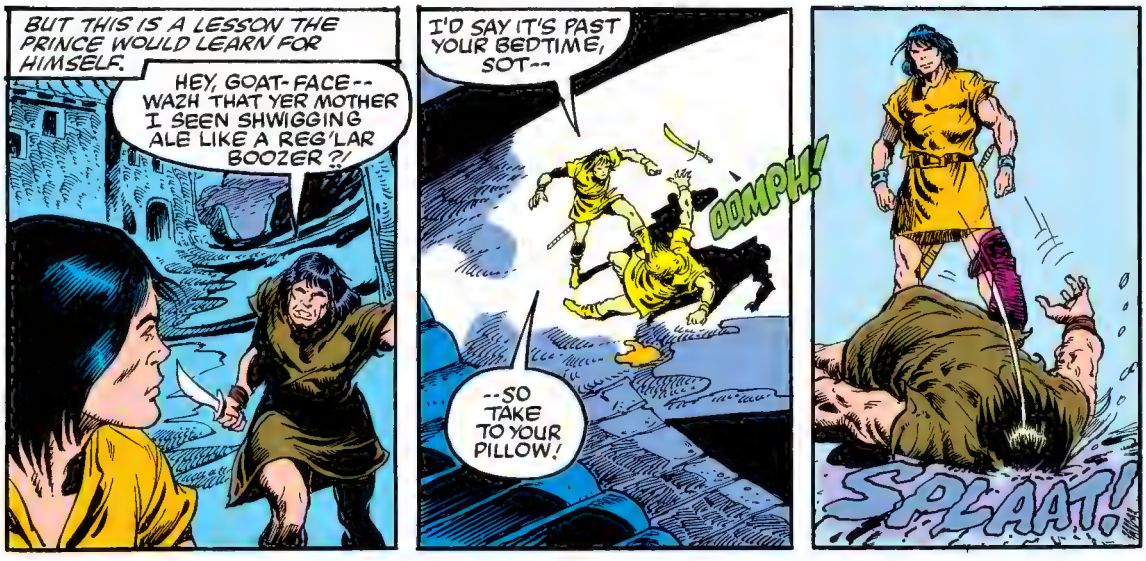
NOW BRING FORTH THE SACRIFICE.
YOU POSSESS NAUGHT TO GRANT THE SPIRIT OF AM-HOTEP. THUS, MUST YOU YIELD YOUR VERY LIFE'S BLOOD TO SATISFY THE KING.
BEND YOUR NECK TO THE FANG OF SET, STYGIAN.
NOW, PRINCE!
NO!
INTRUDERS! DEATH TO THOSE WHO DARE PROFANE THE HALLOWED ALTAR!
NEVER!
BRAAANG!
HASTEN FROM THIS HALL, BROTHERS, WHILE I INVOKE THE FATHER OF THE ELDER RACE TO PURGE THIS TEMPLE OF TRESPASS AND BLASPHEMY!
SET, THE BRAZIER OF ETERNITY BLAZES WITH THE BLOOD OF THY SERVANTS! AVENGE THIS DESECRATION!
HOLD STILL, OLD MAN, I'LL HAVE YOU FREE. THERE!
NO! I WOULD YIELD MY LIFE TO PRESERVE MY SOUL!

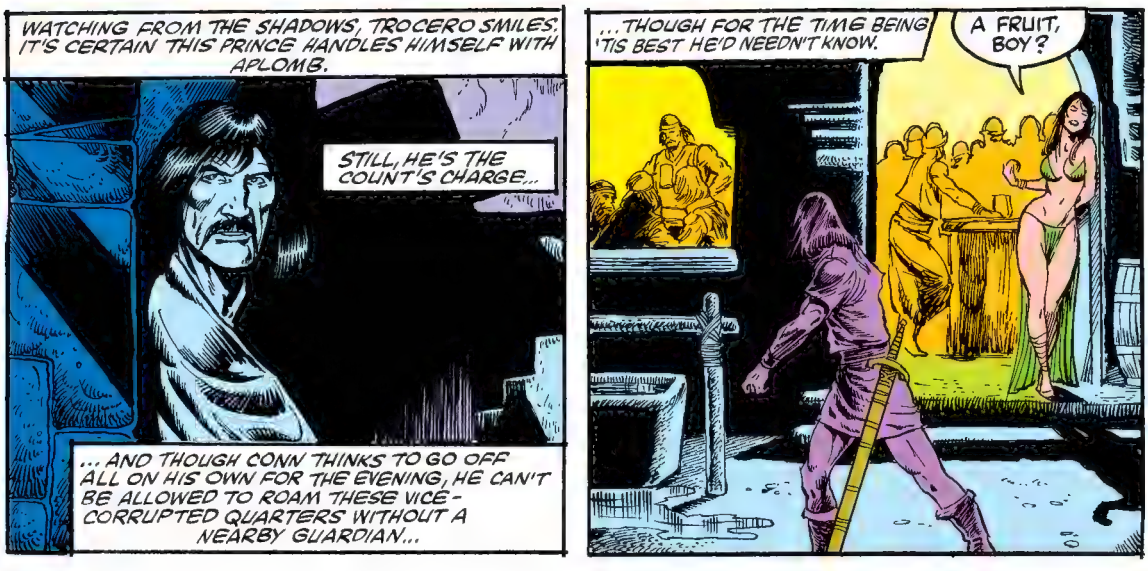

NOW, AM-HOTEP...
...WAKE!
HASHKEEM ME-GEHENAM!
RETURN FROM THE NETHER REGIONS...
...AND RISE!..
... IN VENGEANCE OF THE SLITHERING GOD!
NO, MAN, ARE YOU MAD?!
NOW I AM YOURS, GREAT KING!
OOPH!
AAARGH!
THUD
BACK, YOU SHAMBLING HORROR...
...BACK, OR THE SWORD OF CONN WILL HURL YOUR DRY BONES CLATTER-ING...

...ACROSS--OH!
THUK
CLANG!
OOMPH! NO!
CAN'T... BREATHE...
MITRA! WHERE--?
UNNH!
PRINCE CONN.!
LET'S SEE HOW YOUR WITHERED GRAVES-CLOTHES TAKE TO...
FLAAM!
...FIRE, CORPSE!
SPAK
SPAK
THUMP
SPAK!
SPAK!
I BELIEVE THIS IS WHERE WE TAKE OUR EXIT, MY PRINCE!

SEVERAL DAYS LATER, IN THE ROYAL PALACE OF TARANTIA...
CONAN
AND NOW, KING CONAN, THE TRIBUTES OF THIS OCCASION--
SPEAK, PUBLIUS.
"...THE CITIZENS OF GALPARAN SING CONAN'S PRAISES AND PRESENT HIM WITH THIS LIFELIKE ELK FASHIONED ALL OF GOLD...
"...THE CITIZENS OF TANASUL SEND THREE MONKEYS IN A CAGE OF SOLID SILVER...
"...WHILE THOSE OF SHAMAR OFFER UP THE ANCIENT BROADSWORD OF THEIR ELDERS...
"...AND, LAST, THE CITIZENS OF TAHREM ABOVE THE SHIRKI RIVER PROFFER THIS EMBROIDERED CARPET OF IRANISTAN..."
OH!
GASP
MITRA!
IT...IT READS... 'THUS TO CONAN'S TAX-GATHERERS! FREEDOM FOR AQUILONIA!'
BRAZEN MONGRELS! THEN IT'S TO ARMS!

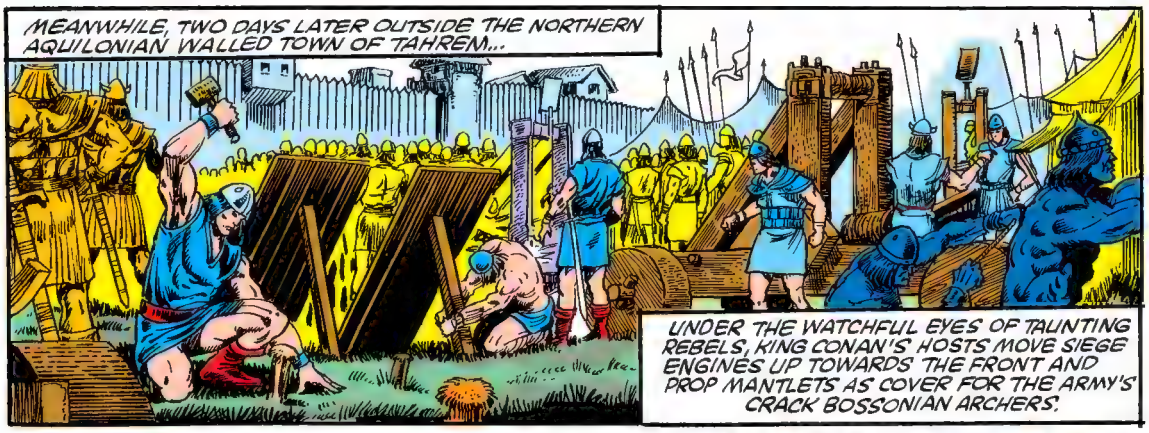

SEVERAL NIGHTFALLS LATER, PRINCE CONN WANDERS A STREET OF NOISY TAVERNS IN ZINGARA.
...FOR PIRATES AND THIEVES, GAMBLERS AND NE'ER-DO-WELLS FLOURISH WHERE THE RULER FAILS TO ENFORCE ANY LAW.
TROCERO HAS ALREADY TOLD HIM THAT THIS CITY IS RULED BY A PETTY PRINCELING, VERY MUCH ALIVE BUT A WITLESS FOOL WHOSE ENDLESS PARTYING IS APED IN THE ENDLESS DEBAUCHERY OF HIS SUBJECTS...

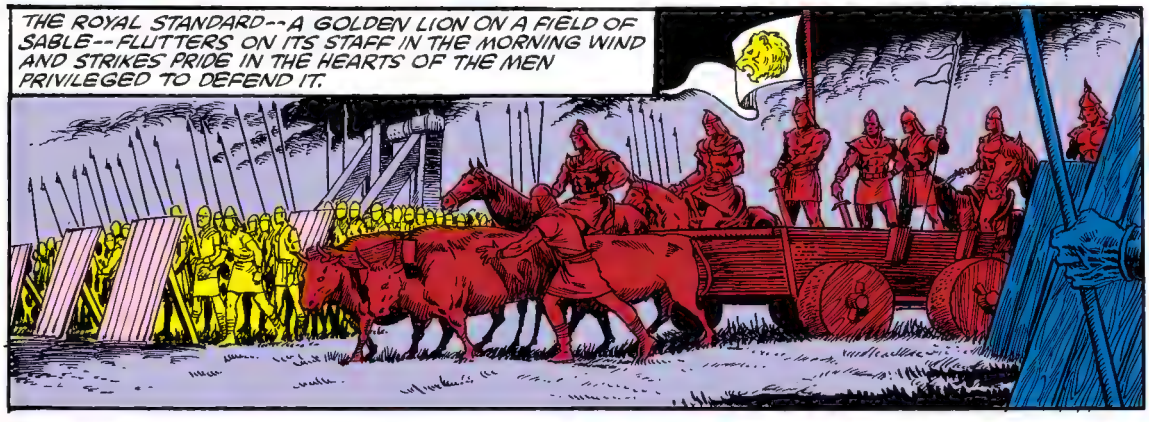

BUT THIS IS A LESSON THE PRINCE WOULD LEARN FOR HIMSELF.
HEY, GOAT-FACE -- WAZH THAT YER MOTHER I SEEN SHWIGGING ALE LIKE A REG'LAR BOOZER ?!
I'D SAY IT'S PAST YOUR BEDTIME, SOT--
OOMPH!
--SO TAKE TO YOUR PILLOW!
SPLAAT!

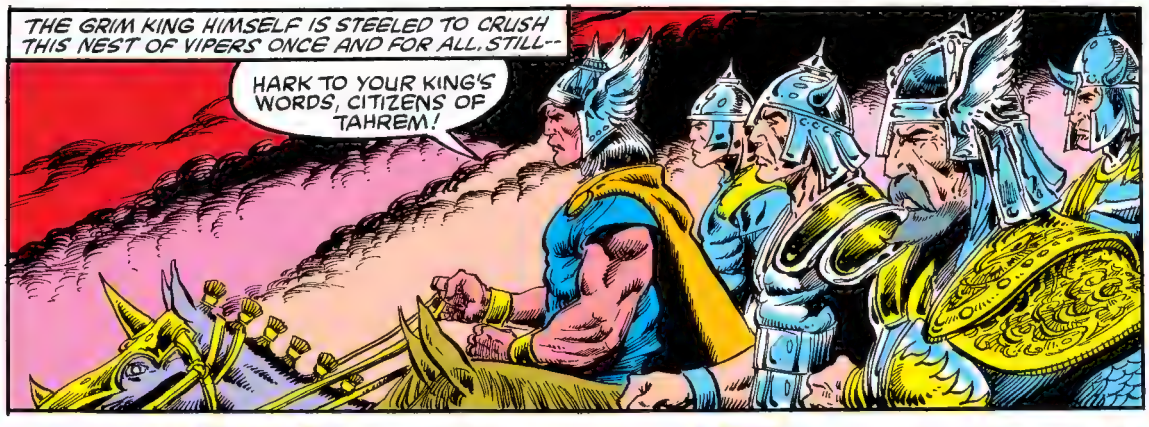

WATCHING FROM THE SHADOWS, TROCERO SMILES. IT'S CERTAIN THIS PRINCE HANDLES HIMSELF WITH APLOMB.
STILL, HE'S THE COUNT'S CHARGE...
... AND THOUGH CONN THINKS TO GO OFF ALL ON HIS OWN FOR THE EVENING, HE CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO ROAM THESE VICE-CORRUPTED QUARTERS WITHOUT A NEARBY GUARDIAN...
...THOUGH FOR THE TIME BEING 'TIS BEST HE'D NEEDN'T KNOW.
A FRUIT, BOY?

HERE'S A JUICY APPLE TO BITE INTO.
I'M NO BOY!
GURRT
NOW WHERE'D YOU GO TO, WENCH?
HUZZAH
HUZZAH
HEY!
HEY!
DOUBLE MY WAGER!
HA!
HA!
ASIDE THERE, LET ME PASS!
I'LL SEE SOME BRUISES DOWN THERE!
GRRR
WHY, IT'S... IT'S...
HUZZAH!
CHANNG!
RRRIUP!
...IT'S... BARBARIC!

SO, YOU'RE NO BOY, EH? THEN DRINK UP LIKE A MAN!
MMM. SURELY, MY MAN'S NOT TOO TIGHT-FISTED TO WAGER ON ONE OF THE FIGHTERS IN THE PIT?
GLUG GLUG
NO... I'VE GOT PLENTY IN... THIS PURSE... OH... HEAD SPINNING...
COME, THEN, TO MY PRIVATE CHAMBER...
WHERE I SHALL MIX KISSES WITH YOUR WINE.
HEY HEY
CLANG!
BUT SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, THE GIRL DEPARTS... ALONE.
BLOOD! BLOOD!
AND SOON, DISTURBED BY THE LENGTH OF THE YOUNG PRINCE'S STAY, TROCERO ENTERS.
IT'S TIME, HE BELIEVES, TO CALL THIS A NIGHT.
BUT CONN IS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN!
AND THEN...
OHH!
THAT'S SOME WELT RISING ON YOUR SCALP!
TROCERO, MY PURSE IS GONE!
A SCHEMING TAVERN MAID, EH? THERE'S A LESSON FOR YOU, LAD.
WE LEAVE THIS KINGDOM COME DAWN. THEN, FOR HERE MEN MAY STEAL WHILE THEIR RULER REVELS, AND NONE WILL REDRESS THE WRONG.


MEANWHILE, TWO DAYS LATER OUTSIDE THE NORTHERN AQUILONIAN WALLED TOWN OF TAHREM...
UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYES OF TAUNTING REBELS, KING CONAN'S HOSTS MOVE SIEGE ENGINES UP TOWARDS THE FRONT AND PROP MANTLETS AS COVER FOR THE ARMY'S CRACK BOSSONIAN ARCHERS.


THE ROYAL STANDARD--A GOLDEN LION ON A FIELD OF SABLE--FLUTTERS ON ITS STAFF IN THE MORNING WIND AND STRIKES PRIDE IN THE HEARTS OF THE MEN PRIVILEGED TO DEFEND IT.


THE GRIM KING HIMSELF IS STEELED TO CRUSH THIS NEST OF VIPERS ONCE AND FOR ALL. STILL--
HARK TO YOUR KING'S WORDS, CITIZENS OF TAHREM!

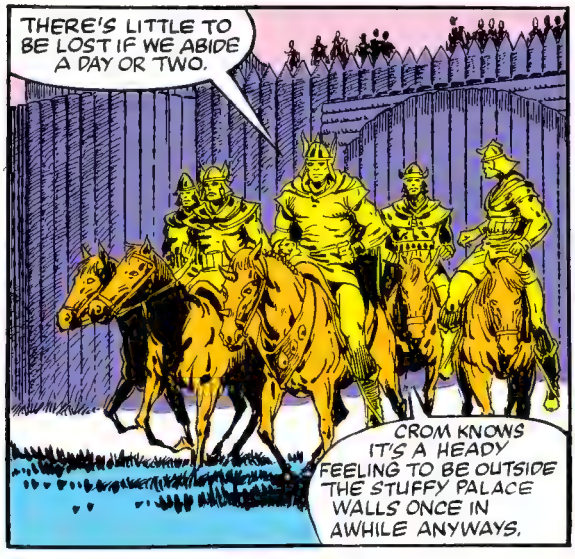
HA! WE FREE AQUILONIANS WILL NEVER ABIDE A BARBARIAN KING!
COME, WHAT WILL YOU DO, CIMMERIAN? SPILL MORE BLOOD OF AQUILONIA TO PRESERVE YOUR TYRANNY?

HHNN
FHWIT

WE'LL ANSWER YOUR SHAFTS IF NEED BE, TWENTY TO ONE-- BUT SURRENDER NOW AND YOU'LL BE GIVEN PASSAGE OUT OF THE COUNTRY.
YOU ALONE CAN PREVENT THE SPILLING OF AQUILONIAN BLOOD BY AQUILONIA'S OWN PROTECTORS!

YOU MISERABLE BARBARIAN! DARE YOU FASHION YOURSELF PROTECTOR OF A NATION YOU'VE TRAMPLED UNDER YOUR HEEL?!
THEN SEND YOUR WOMEN AND CHILDREN THROUGH THE GATES. THEY'LL BE SAFE IN TARANTIA UNTIL THE BATTLE'S DONE AND OVER WITH!
NEVER, DOG-KING!

I'D COUNSEL IMMEDIATE ASSAULT, MY LIEGE.
NO.


THERE'S LITTLE TO BE LOST IF WE ABIDE A DAY OR TWO.
CROM KNOWS IT'S A HEADY FEELING TO BE OUTSIDE THE STUFFY PALACE WALLS ONCE IN AWHILE ANYWAYS.

AND THOUGH I'M THE FIRST WHO'D ROAST THESE REBEL HIDES ON AN OPEN PIT...
... STILL THERE MAY BE THOSE INSIDE WHO ARE CAPTIVES OF THEIR OWN TOWNSFOLK AS PRINCE CONN SUGGESTED.
LET'S SEE IF WE CAN'T SPARE SOME INNOCENT LIVES BEFORE WE GO IN.
I'D PREFER MEN NOT BRUIT THAT CONAN THE KING IS OVER-ZEALOUS TO SHED HIS OWN SUBJECTS' BLOOD.

ELSEWHERE, THAT EVENING...
WELL THEN, I'VE SEEN STYGIA'S FOLK IN THE GRIP OF A DARK AND POWERFUL PRIESTHOOD, AND I'LL NOT SOON FORGET ZINGARA'S LAWLESS RABBLE.
BUT MAYHAP HERE IN ZAMORA WE'LL FIND A PEOPLE WELL-CARED FOR BY ITS GOVERNMENT.
MITRA, YOU'LL FIND NO SUCH THING!
FOR ALL HERE LIVE IN FEAR OF MALAKON, A DESPOT AND A TYRANT.
LOOK AROUND AT THESE DESERTED STREETS, MY PRINCE--
--LIKE EVERY TYRANT, MALAKON FEARS HIS RUTHLESS REIGN WILL END WITH AN ASSASSIN'S DIRK.
EVERY MAN IS THUS SUSPECT AS AN ENEMY, AND ALL MUST REPAIR TO THEIR HOMES SOON AS THE DAY'S WORK IS ENDED.
IN THIS WAY MALAKON HOPES TO PREVENT CONSPIRACIES AGAINST THE CROWN.
THE CRIMINALS, OF COURSE ENJOY THE FREEDOM OF THEIR OWN DENS AND RATHOLES, BUT THE DECENT FOLK MUST ABIDE BY A DUSK CURFEW...
...OR RISK ARREST BY THE DREADED ROYAL GUARD.
KNOK KNOK
WHAT IS IT?
A NIGHT'S LODGING AND A SQUARE MEAL FOR TWO, GOOD SIR.
BEGONE! 'TIS SUICIDE TO LODGE STRANGERS HERE!
CLACK!

WELL, THAT CERTAINLY UNDERSCORES WHAT I'VE BEEN SAY-- WHAT?!
HO! WHAT VERMIN HAVE WE HERE WHO BREACH THE ROYAL CURFEW?!
I'LL ANSWER THAT INSOLENCE WITH COLD STEEL--
DISCRETION BEFORE VALOR, PRINCE. I BELIEVE...
"... WE'RE HANDILY OUTNUMBERED."
SO, CONAN SENDS HIS MANGY CUB TO SPY ME OUT, EH?
MY FATHER WOULD SOONER SPY ON NURSEMAIDS THAN ON YOU, MALAKON, A PETTY TYRANT WHO SMOTHERS FREEDOM!
QUITE TO THE CONTRARY, BARBARIAN PUP! YOUR WRETCHED FATHER SETS POOR EXAMPLE FOR THIS REGION, ACCORDING HIS SUBJECTS EXCESSIVE FREEDOM. BY THE SPIDER-GOD OF YEZUD, OUR OWN CITIZENS WOULD SOON BE CLAMORING FOR THE SAME!
BUT I HAVE DISPATCHED MEN OF ZAMORA TO MASQUERADE AS AQUILONIAN REBELS AND DESTABILIZE CONAN'S RULE.
EVEN AS WE SPEAK, MY HAND-PICKED AGENTS HAVE SEIZED YOUR TOWN OF TAHREM IN THE GUISE OF A CIVIL UPRISING.

BUT COME, COME, I PLAY AN UNGRACIOUS HOST. SURELY YOU ARE EAGER TO VISIT THE FABLED DUNGEONS OF ZAMORA.
SHORTLY...
TWO PIGS TO BE PENNED, EH? OINK OINK. HEE-HEE!
SURE IT'S NO SHADIZAR, BUT I TRUST YE'LL FIND THE ACCOMMO-DATIONS TO YER LIKINGS. HAH!
NOW-- BLAST YER EYES! WHERE'S MY KEYS TO THE WALL MANACLES?
BAH! THE KING'LL HAVE ME SKINNED IF I LEFT THEM BEHIND AGAIN!
YE TWO BE STAYIN' PUT 'TIL I RETURN!
GO TO THE DEVIL, YOU TUB OF LARD!
HWIP!
WELL, I NEVER-- A TALKING PIG?! HEE-HEE!
HERE-- HAVE A LIGHT TO LOOK AROUN'...
...AN' SEE WHAT AWAITS YE...

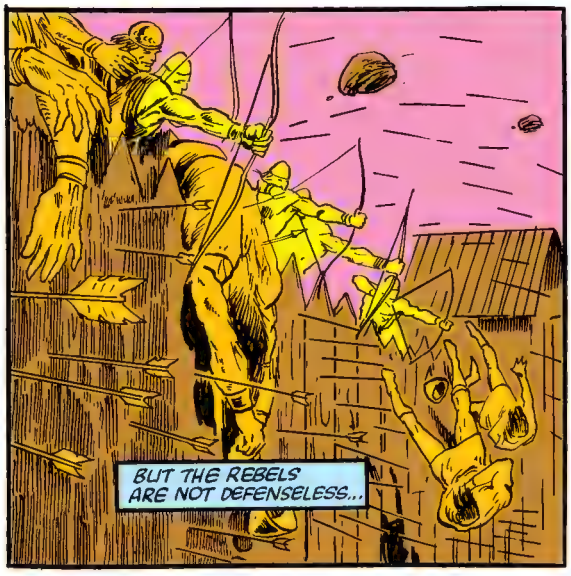
HNNEIGH!
...LESS OF COURSE, WE FEED FEED YE TO THE HORSES FIRST! HA!
CLANK
SPRING TO MY BACK, PRINCE, AND TRY TO REACH THE SCONCE TO SINGE YOUR BONDS!
BUT MY WEIGHT, TROCERO--
--WILL DO LESS HARM THAN A ZAMORAN RACK, I ASSURE YOU.
OH!
TUNK
IT SEEMS I'VE GOTTEN ON IN YEARS. NEVER MIND. AGAIN, BOY!
ARE YOU READY?
AYE!
THERE'S A LAD!

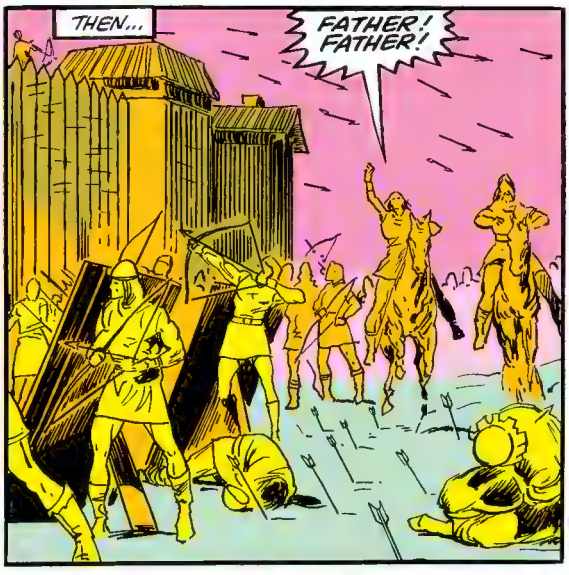
I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN REACH--
I'VE GOT IT, TROCERO!
FFTT!
FFTT
FFT
SPAK!
TROCERO, I CAN'T--
TROCERO, I'M FREE!
YOU'LL PUT OINTMENT ON THOSE BURNS SOON AS WE'RE IN SAFETY!
IT CAN WAIT! THERE, YOU'RE UNTIED!
NOW, WHICH ONE OF YE WILL KISS ME BARBED WHIP FIST--?!
YOU CAN KISS THE FLOOR, SCUM!
URMPH!
I'VE THE KEYS!

UP THOSE STAIRS-- THAT'S WHERE THE SOUND OF HORSES IS COMING FROM.
HNNHN!
AYE, IT'S A STABLE ALRIGHT, AND OUT OF DOORS. IF YOUR FATHER WERE HERE HE'D SPLINTER THESE PORTALS WITH HIS SHOULDERS.
ONE OF THESE MUST FIT...
FOOTSTEPS, TROCERO!
TAP TAP TAP
MITRA CONFOUND THESE KEYS!
TAPATAP TAPATAP TAPATAP TAPATAP
CHRT CHRT
THERE THEY ARE! SEIZE THEM OR THE KING WILL HANG US TO THE RAVENS!
ONLY TWO? THERE'S ODDS WE CAN LIVE WITH. I'LL HOLD THESE SEWER RATS AT BAY...
HWIP!
...WHILE YOU SEEK--

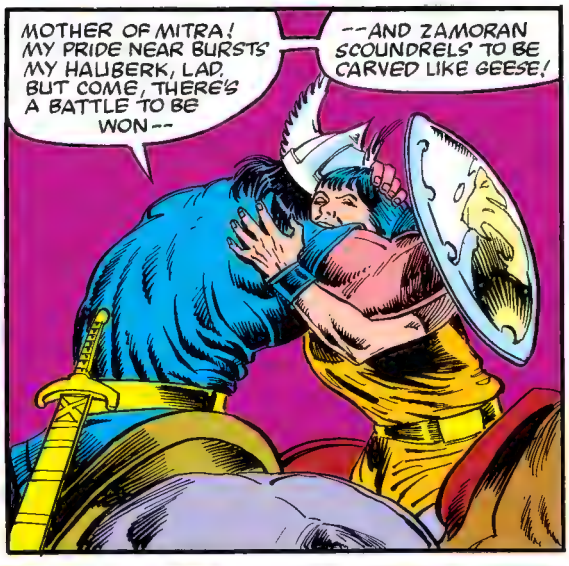
-- THE RIGHT KEY!
CLIK
HNNNHN!
YOU'LL TENDER OUR APOLOGIES TO MALAKON...
HWIP!
... AND TELL THE TYRANT THAT MORE URGENT MATTERS TOOK US TO TAHREM!
MOAAN!
SINCE PRINCE CONN AND TROCERO HAVE FLED ZAMORA, DAWN HAS RISEN TWICE OVER TAHREM.
... AND AN AIR OF RAW IMPATIENCE PERVADES CONAN'S LEGIONS, AS SQUADRON AFTER SQUADRON SWINGS INTO PLACE -- SERRIED RANKS OF PIKEMAN AND MOUNTED KNIGHTS IN GLEAMING ARMOR, AND AT THEIR HEAD THE FAMED BOSSONIAN ARCHERS FROM THE WESTERN MARCHES, FINEST BOWMEN OF THEIR AGE --

CROM'S BLOOD! I'VE NO MORE TIME TO WASTE! IF THAT'S THE FINAL ANSWER OF THOSE JACKALS, THEN SOUND THE TRUMPETS!
BA-RUM
BAA-RUMM!
GOLD TALENTS FOR EVERY REBEL HEAD THAT ROLLS!
NOW, ARCHERS BLOT OUT THE SUN WITH YOUR SHAFTS!
FIRE!
KA-RUNG!
AND THE MANGONELS KICK UP THEIR REARS LIKE BUCKING NAGS AS THEY FLING THEIR HUGE STONE CATAPULTS OVER THE STOCKADE WALLS.

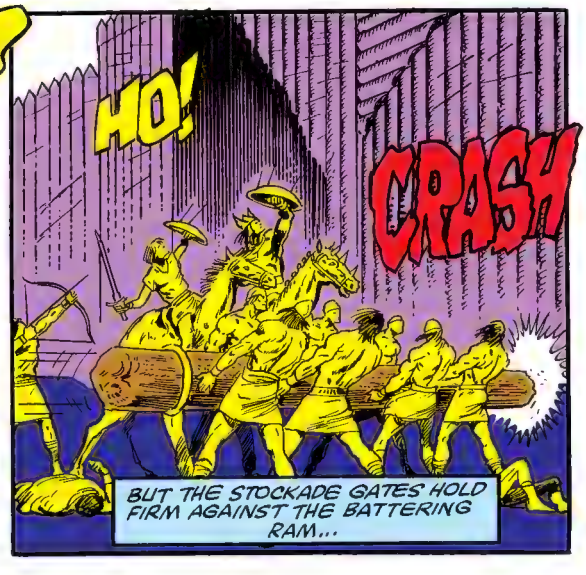

BUT THE REBELS ARE NOT DEFENSELESS...


THEN...
FATHER! FATHER!

CONN!
FATHER, THE REBELS ARE INFILTRATORS FROM ZAMORA WHO HOLD THIS TOWN HOSTAGE--
A PLOY OF ZAMORA'S TYRANT, MY LIEGE!
LET ME FIGHT BY YOUR SIDE, FATHER!

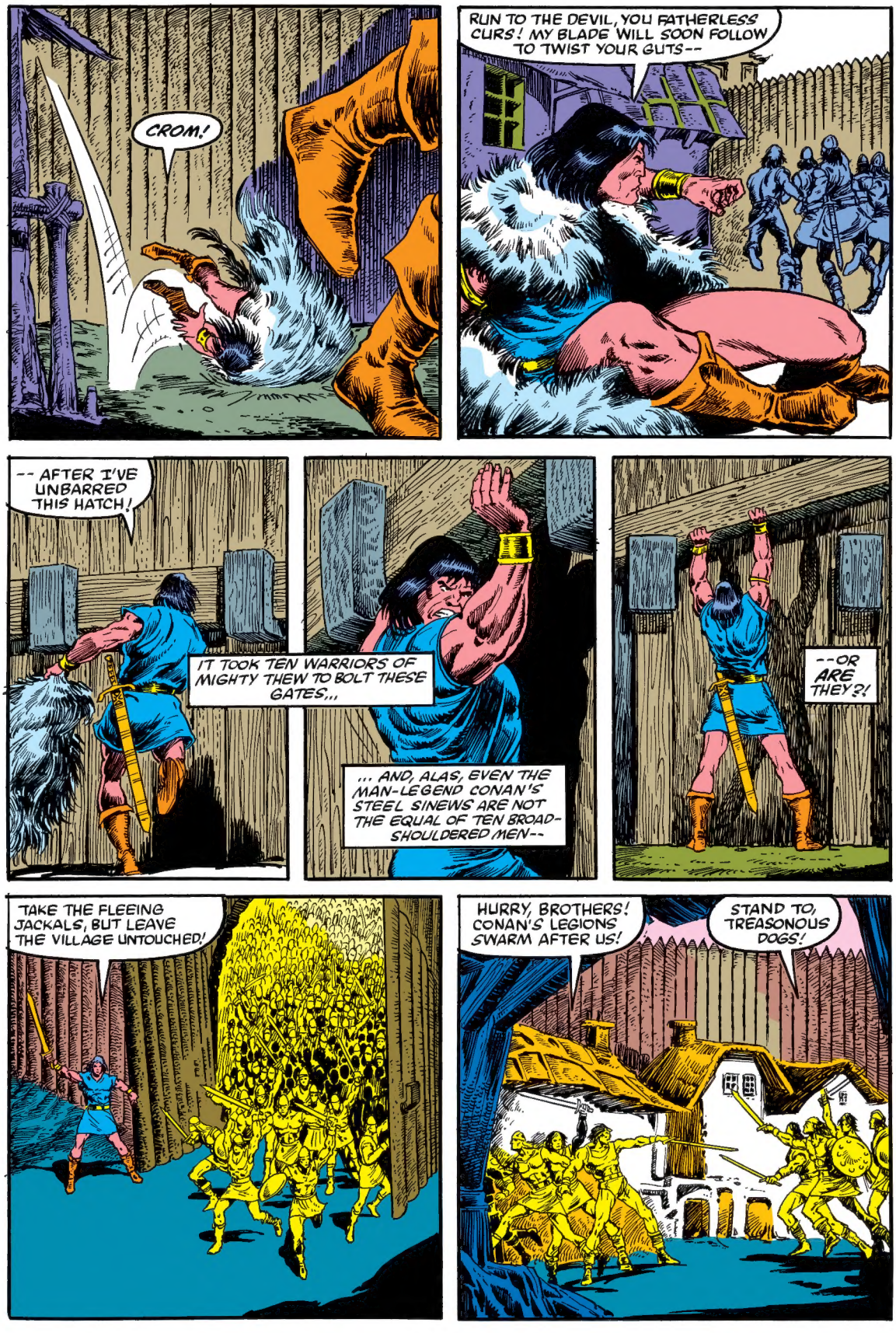

MOTHER OF MITRA! MY PRIDE NEAR BURSTS MY HAUBERK, LAD. BUT COME, THERE'S A BATTLE TO BE WON--
--AND ZAMORAN SCOUNDRELS TO BE CARVED LIKE GEESE!

HEAVE, AQUILONIANS!


HO!
CRASH
BUT THE STOCKADE GATES HOLD FIRM AGAINST THE BATTERING RAM...

...WHILE BEHIND THOSE GATES...
HEAR ME, BROTHERS! I'M OFF TO CLEAR OUR ESCAPE. WAIT FOR THE ALARUM TO ABANDOM THE BATTLEMENTS!
BE READY TO FLEE THE TUNNELS UNDERGROUND!
WHEN THE AQUILONIANS BURST THROUGH IT'S CERTAIN THEN THAT IN THEIR FURY THEY'LL SLAUGHTER THE TOWNSFOLK WE'VE HELD HOSTAGE!
THIS MOLTEN LEAD WILL COOL YOUR TEMPERS, SWINE OF CONAN!
PPLAASH!
AAIIEEE! AAIIEE!
THERE'S THE SIGNAL TO LEAVE OUR POSTS!
THEY'VE LEFT THE BATTLEMENTS, CONN!
THOSE ZAMORAN DOGS WILL BE LOST TO US, I TELL YOU, UNLESS WE PUSH THROUGH THIS VERY MOMENT!
CAN WE SCALE--

NO TIME FOR THAT!
YOU'LL LEAD THE CHARGE, LAD!
NOW BREAK TIME'S NECK, AQUILONIANS! GET ON WITH IT!
THIS CLOAK OF FUR WILL CUSHION THE FALL!
REMEMBER, MEN, WE WANT THE INFILTRATORS--SPARE ALL ELSE!
HO! LET'S FEEL THIS WILD ONAGER KICK!
SBRAANG
LIKE A ROYAL EAGLE, CONAN SOARS...
...A CATAPULT OF CORDED MUSCLE AND IRON NERVE OVER THE STOCKADE WALLS!


CROM!
RUN TO THE DEVIL, YOU FATHERLESS CURS! MY BLADE WILL SOON FOLLOW TO TWIST YOUR GUTS--
-- AFTER I'VE UNBARRED THIS HATCH!
IT TOOK TEN WARRIORS OF MIGHTY THEW TO BOLT THESE GATES,,,
,,, AND, ALAS, EVEN THE MAN-LEGEND CONAN'S STEEL SINEWS ARE NOT THE EQUAL OF TEN BROAD-SHOULDERED MEN--
--OR ARE THEY?!
TAKE THE FLEEING JACKALS, BUT LEAVE THE VILLAGE UNTOUCHED!
HURRY, BROTHERS! CONAN'S LEGIONS SWARM AFTER US!
STAND TO, TREASONOUS DOGS!

NO! NO! HOLD! WE... WE YIELD...
'TIS THE KING, CONAN HIMSELF-- I KNOW THAT MOUNTAINOUS FRAME! AND WITH HIM OUR SOLDIERY!
WE'RE SAVED!
WE'RE SAVED!
MITRA BLESS YOU, KING CONAN!
PRAISE TO THE KING!
WELL, CAPTAIN NEOLIDES, WE'VE TAKEN THIS TOWN WITHOUT THE NEED FOR EVEN ONE SPUTTERING TORCH! HA!
AGREED, YOUR MAJESTY, AND BROKEN THE BACK OF ZAMORA'S CRAVEN SCHEMING!
AND SOON...
AYE, FATHER, WITH ALL HER FAULTS AQUILONIA STILL GRANTS HER CITIZENS FREEDOM TO ENJOY THEIR OWN EARNINGS, TO SPEAK WITHOUT FEAR, AND TO LIVE BY JUST LAWS.

I SUPPOSE THAT IS THE BEST ONE CAN EXPECT FROM FALLIBLE HUMANKIND.
PERHAPS, CONN.
THOUGH THERE'S NO TRUE MONARCH WORTH HIS THRONE THAT WON'T REACH FOR MITRA'S VERY HEAVENS TO BRING PEACE AND PROSPERITY TO HIS OWN REALM.
SO, I SEE YOU'VE GAINED MUCH FROM YOUR JOURNEY, SON.
INDEED, MY LORD, AND HE'S LEARNED MORE THAN THAT--
-- FOR EXAMPLE, TO DISTRUST A PRETTY MAID WHO PUTS HER TANKARD TO YOUR LIPS... AND HER EYES TO YOUR PURSE!
HA HA! NO NEED TO BLUSH, BOY! THERE'S A LESSON YOUR FATHER HAD TO LEARN ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION!
LIKE FATHER LIKE SON, EH TROCERO?!
END